

House Republican Press Release

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Wilton Public Library Groundbreaking Ceremony



Remarks by State Representative Toni Boucher

Thank you Judy Higby and The Wilton Library Board.

I cannot tell you how delighted I am to join in this happy celebration. I am particularly pleased to be here because the public library was crucial in my development as a child and my deep fondness for it has not diminished over the years.

In those early years when life was not as complex, sophisticated nor hurried, my brother and I would spend literally hundreds of hours on the floor of our local public library between overflowing stacks of books. Our elementary schools would have weekly field trips to the library so that we could gather around an enchanting reader of some favorite stories. She would transport us far away from our very ordinary everyday lives to new and exotic places, opening our minds to all the possibilities, all the while making us wish that the story would never come to an end. There our love of reading began and continues to this day. Now more than ever, as we rush through our daily lives, the library is a welcoming gathering place. It is a place of solace, refuge and reassurance, a place to connect with the world around us.

Today we celebrate months, no years, of planning to break the ground for a new vastly improved Wilton Public Library. Although I am sure there will be difficult months ahead, as with any disruption during a building project, nerves may become frayed at the inevitable bumps in the road but the team assembled here is the very best of our community - a community founded on its love for and promotion of education and literacy. There were so many that helped to achieve this moment: past and current library boards, other town boards, countless volunteers, young and mature, an excellent staff.

How wise of you to snap up one of the most knowledgeable and most devoted librarian anywhere, Kathy Leeds, a little help from our friends up in Hartford, Lt. Gov Jodi Rell, our State Senator Judi Freedman and Rep. John Hetherington. Most importantly, we most never forget the Wilton Taxpayer.

At this year's town meeting, the voters were asked to vote on the first renovation of the Wilton Public Library in over 30 years. The Wilton taxpayer had to be convinced that there is a need and that there would be a good return on investment. If we truly believe

that learning is a lifelong journey for us and all who come after us, then there could be no greater community need than our public library. As for a return on investment, our public library provides real time information on almost any subject in every medium available to every member of our community, no matter the age or income level.

This was not always the case. The one-time governor of New York, Samuel J. Tilden who upon his death in 1886, bequeathed the bulk of his fortune -- about \$2.4 million -- to "establish and maintain a free library and reading room in the city of New York."

John Bigelow, a New York attorney and Tilden trustee, devised a bold plan whereby the resources of the Astor and Lenox private libraries would be combined to form a new entity, to be known as The New York Public Library on May 23, 1895. This collaboration was hailed as an unprecedented example of private philanthropy for the public good.

Democracy and freedom depend on universal literacy. We have only to look outside our borders or to the influx of new immigrants to America to appreciate the necessity of accessing the free distribution of information

Laura A. Pinhey wrote on the role of the Library in a democracy:

"Libraries in the United States of America have long cultivated democratic environments. The foundation of our public library system is built on the assumption that access to information should be free and open to all. Indeed, libraries take a democratic stance toward not only the persons they serve, but also toward the very materials they provide: to offer materials representing all points of view on a given topic, freedom of expression, and freedom of access are all principles of library philosophy. It follows that libraries, microcosms of democracy, are integral to a truly democratic society."

During these troubling times she further reflects on the role of "Libraries in the World's New Democracies"

"Libraries are an essential component of the global resurgence of democracy, which has been underway since the 1970s. They have helped citizens to participate more fully and effectively in their democracy, to make informed choices about government, and, by connecting them with appropriate resources, to educate themselves for personal and occupational success and fulfillment, possibilities withheld from them until very recently. And at a time when young democracies must stretch their scarce financial resources to meet just basic needs, a library's cost-benefit ratio is high: the purchase of new library materials allows access for many citizens to a wealth of information at relatively little cost. In these ways, libraries have helped to vitalize new democracies and move them toward authenticity."

Today, Technology has filled our lives and broadens our reach so that we can be in direct contact with places and people all over the world. There is a new imperative in this age

of information and technology. The public is demanding more from this resource, especially our seniors.

James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress states: "The new electronic age makes the nation's 15,000 public libraries "more, rather than less, important to the progress of the United States in the 21st Century." Citing cutbacks in locally financed public libraries, Dr. Billington warned that Americans are "in serious danger of eroding a unique legacy laboriously created by our forebears" even as public demands for modern library services increase and two-thirds of all Americans use a library in the course of a year."

Congratulations Wilton for not being so shortsighted and making this day possible.

You have assured that future generations of Wilton citizens can discover words such as;

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep"

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

"1638 - The colony of Connecticut would be governed by the free will of a free people"

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."

"The taxpayer -- that's someone who works for the federal government but doesn't have to take the civil service examination."

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy."

"And one man in his time plays many parts"

"We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. "

"If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul.
More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

And a favorite and the one I will leave you with...

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." -[Abraham Lincoln](#)